

ACTIVITY BUST SOME MYTHS!

Ask the group to stand up. When you share the following statements, get them to put their hands on their heads if they think it's a fact or put their hands on their hips if they think it's a tall tale. Then share the correct answer.



Ten year-old Sofia has been living in a refugee camp for four years. She doesn't know what became of her parents; all she really remembers about her homeland is leaving.

"We came to Tanzania by boat. We were very many people running and pushing because of the fighters, because they were coming."

Sofia goes to school at the camp where she lives, but only if her grandmother doesn't need her for chores.

Many children in refugee camps have to take care of younger siblings, and spend a lot of time gathering firewood, collecting water, or doing the cooking.

ACTIVITY

Reflect on Sofia's story and discuss as a group:

- What has happened in the past four years? How have you changed? Is it a long period of time?
- What would be different for you now if you had spent the past four years in the same place as Sofia?
- Are you ever kept home from school to do chores? How would this effect Sofia?



- Refugees don't contribute to Australian society. **myth**
Quite the contrary, once refugees are established in Australia, they make positive economic and cultural contributions.
- There are more than 35 million refugees worldwide*. **fact**
That is more than the number of people there are living in Australia. 63 million are internally displaced (have had to leave their homes but still living in their own country).
- People seeking asylum who arrive by boat are illegal. **myth**
Seeking asylum, regardless of how you arrive, is a basic human right under the UN Refugee Convention that Australia is a signatory to, but not keeping its word on.
- 40% of all forcibly displaced people who have fled their homes are children **fact**

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Ask the group questions then discuss the facts.

WHAT IS A REFUGEE?

A refugee is a person who has fled their homeland for their safety.

WHAT IS A PERSON SEEKING ASYLUM?

A person seeking asylum is someone who has sought protection as a refugee, but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been granted. They are still *seeking asylum*.

DOES EVERY PERSON SEEKING ASYLUM BECOME A REFUGEE?

No, if their application is declined, that means they can be sent back to the country they fled from.

WHERE DO REFUGEES COME FROM?

More than half (52%) of all refugees come from just 3 countries: **Syria (6.5m), Ukraine (5.7m) and Afghanistan (5.7m).**

The majority are staying in neighbouring countries including: Türkiye (3.6m), Iran (3.4m), Colombia (2.5m), Germany (2.1m) and Pakistan (1.7m)

WHY DO THEY LEAVE THEIR HOMES?

Becoming a refugee is not a choice. People are forced to flee their homeland because of:

- War;
- Persecution on the grounds of race, nationality, sex, religion, or political opinion

While there are environmental refugees who have to flee their homes (UN estimates 21M people are displaced per year) they are not protected by international law and recognised under the refugee definition.

HOW MANY REFUGEES COME TO AUSTRALIA?

The Australia government grants up to 20,000 refugee and humanitarian visas each year. That's not many considering the 35 million refugees worldwide.

*Source: UNHCR Global trends report <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2022>

WHAT VINNIES DOES

VINNIES MIGRANT AND REFUGEE SERVICES

Across Australia, we welcome and support newly arrived families of migrant, refugee and asylum seeking backgrounds and help them settle into their new community. These programs help enable newly settled individuals and families to become self-reliant, participate in the broader Australian community and develop a sense of belonging.

These services include accommodation and material aid, settlement support, referrals and education scholarships. We also run programs such as Homework Help, Buddies Days and Multicultural Playgroups.

VINNIES CAMPAIGNS

The St Vincent de Paul Society is a vocal advocate for the rights of refugees and people seeking asylum at a local, state and national level.

Check out the current campaigns at socialjustice.vinnies.org.au to get involved or to start your own local campaign.

Sometimes all we need is enough signatures from everyday people to force the parliament to discuss an issue. You can help us collect these signatures!

"The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Stands with refugees and all people seeking asylum.

Everyone has the right to safety, to permanent protection and the opportunity to rebuild their lives"

- Yolanda Saiz, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW CEO

ACTIVITY

Imagine what it would be like to be a person who has been forced to flee their country for their own safety. What are some challenges you might face when arriving to a new country? For example: no job, different language, etc.

Draw a mind map with these challenges in thought bubbles then add some flow on challenges that you might face.

Now you can see that some issues quickly snowball and lead to greater disadvantage for people seeking safety in a new country

CHALLENGE

As a group, find out what the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is and talk about what rights are listed for people seeking asylum, and how we could better uphold these rights in Australia.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

BE ADVOCATES

Talk to your family, friends, classmates, and community to help raise awareness about refugees and people seeking asylum and fight stereotypes.

RESEARCH THE TOPIC

See what Vinnies is doing in your local area and how they're advocating to government. Collect signatures for a Vinnies petition, start your own or invite a local MP or Mayor to your group meeting or event so you can share your concerns with them - and let us know about it!

Visit: socialjustice.vinnies.org.au/issues/refugees-and-people-seeking-asylum

BE GENEROUS

Run a fundraising activity at school. Volunteer at a local Vinnies service - as a volunteer based organisation, we always need more hands on deck! Check online to see what's in your area and how you can help.

"Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution"

- Article 14, Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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